Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program

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Complicating Factors

Block 15

Sexual Assault Response Coordinator Training

Power of Myths and Stereotypes

- Well-entrenched beliefs about rape, rape victims and rapists have profound effect on victim's willingness to come forward and the response when they do

- Rape: low risk-high reward crime

LaFree, Rape and Criminal Justice

- 32% of jurors believed a woman's resistance was a critical factor in determining a rapist's culpability.

- 59% of jurors believed a woman should do everything she can to repel her attacker.

Times/CNN Poll (1991)

38% of the men

and

37% of the women

said that a raped woman

is partly to blame

if she dresses provocatively

Georgia Opinion Poll (1998)
(Random sample: ages 18 to 49)

49% of the men
and
42% of the women
believe women cry rape
when it hasn't really happened

Georgia Opinion Poll (1998)

(Random sample: ages 18 to 49)

48% of the men
and
48% of the women
believe sexual assault
necessarily includes
the use of a gun or other weapon.

Georgia Opinion Poll (1998)

(Random sample: ages 18 to 49)

20% of the men

and

9% of the women

believe a woman has **no right**

to say “no”

to having sex with her husband.

Rhode Island Study of School Children (1988) (1,700 6th to 9th grade students)

65% of the boys

and

57% of the girls

said it is acceptable

to force a woman to have sex

if the couple has been dating

for more than six months

Rhode Island Study of School Children (1988) (1,700 6th to 9th grade students)

50% of the boys

and

50% of the girls

said a woman walking alone

is **asking** to be raped

Rhode Island Study of School Children (1998) (2,467 6th to 9th grade students)

Of the 9th graders,
62% of the boys
and
58% of the girls
said it is acceptable
to force a date to have intercourse
if the couple has been dating
for “a long time”

Rhode Island Study of School Children (1998) (2,467 6th to 9th grade students)

Of the 9th graders,

70% of the boys

and

53% of the girls

said it is acceptable

to force a date to have intercourse

if the couple has had intercourse before.

Rhode Island Study of School Children (1998) (2,467 6th to 9th grade students)

Of the 9th graders,

73% of the boys

and

78% of the girls

said a man has the right to have sexual intercourse against the woman's consent

if they are married

Complications from Support System's Response

- Skepticism from support system
  - Doesn't match schema for offense
  - Victim unable to explain
  - Professional response supports skepticism
- Results
  - Non-supportive response
  - Heightened sense of isolation

Complications from Professional Response

- Lack of trained response from professionals
  - No identification of the crime as criminal
  - Victim blaming response
  - “No” evidence
  - No access to services
  - Frustration and confusion for victim

Complications from Sexual Orientation

- Trust Issues
  - Fear of disclosure of sexual orientation
  - Need acceptance of lifestyle and of individual
  - “Don’t ask; don’t tell”
- Hate Crime Target
- Support Network/Referrals
  - Real connection where disclosure is safe

Challenges Related to Culture, Race, and Class

- Culture
  - Has meaning to the inner and outer self
  - Among its many implications, it impacts on interpersonal relationships, communication style, spirituality, and assigning meaning to experiences
- Race
  - Race is a factor in oppression and discrimination
- Class
  - Poverty is related to high levels of stress in every aspect of life
  - The elderly, persons with disabilities, and “minority” racial groups are over-represented in lower socio-economic status levels

Dallas Times Herald, Race Tilts the Scales of Justice *(1991)*

Rape Jurors' Sentences Devalue Women of Color

Dallas Times Herald

(1991)

Offender's Race	Victim's Race	Median Sentence
Black	White	19 Years
White	Black	10 Years
White	White	5 Years
Hispanic	Hispanic	2.5 Years
Black	Black	1 Year

Challenges Related to Culture, Race, and Class

- Common Helping Errors
  - Violations of client's cultural norms for communication or interpersonal relations
  - Language insensitivity
  - Inattention to manifestations of own bias related to strong group affiliation with one's own culture/race
  - Ignoring inequities in an effort to be "color blind"
  - Overgeneralization within a group
  - Exaggeration of difference

Complications from Disability

- Stigma
  - Helpless, needing benevolent care from others
- Inferior social status
- Feelings of not belonging
  - Heightened sense of isolation post-assault
- Discrimination
- Power and relationship issues
- Dependency encouraged to detriment of individuation
- Sense of vulnerability intensified post-assault

Complications from Disability

- Disability Related Needs
  - Safety plan that recognizes disability
  - Accessible facilities
  - Interpreters for clients who are deaf
  - TTY phone service
  - Psycho-educational materials and signage in Braille
  - Protection from care givers when appropriate
  - Specially trained staff
    - Sensitive to many different disability concerns
    - Knowledge of specialized providers of disability-related services

Kemp, 1996

Risk Taking Behaviors

- Risk taking and developmental tasks
  - Establishing a sexual identity
  - Individuation from parental authority
  - Defining the self in relation to peers
- Risk taking vs. culpability
  - Risk taking and predators
  - Risk taking and social support
  - Risk taking and community support

Violations of Air Force Regulations

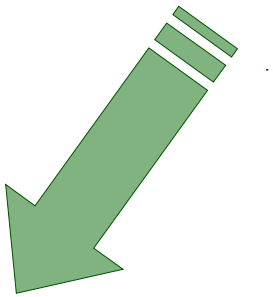
- Criminal vs. Disciplinary Infractions
  - Intoxication
  - Drug use
  - Fraternization
  - Homosexual acts
  - Failure to protect children from abusive partner
- Commander discretion

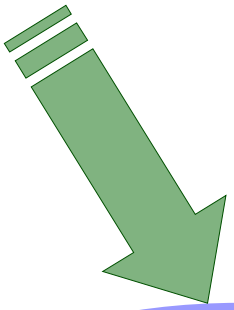
Big Media Cases

- Profoundly negative effect on sexual assault victims
  - Further stigma and isolation
  - Tremendous loss of privacy
  - “Accuser”
- Often drives other victims underground
- Requires additional effort to counter negative effects

"Secondary" Victims

Significant Others:





Critical to recovery process for victims

Experience secondary trauma

"Secondary" Victims

- Common Reactions
  - Rage/Revenge
    - Counterproductive for victim, too much like offender
    - Response to powerlessness
  - Over-protectiveness
    - Constrains the victim's need for control
    - Strains the relationship
  - Sharing data without victim permission
    - May add to victim's perception of stigma
  - Inability to listen
    - Avoidance, distraction
    - Assigning own meanings instead of listening to victim

McCombie, 1980

"Secondary" Victims

- Exposure to traumatic material
  - Symptomatic victim
  - Description of traumatic event
- Symptoms of secondary victims
  - Nightmares
  - Sexual issues
  - Alienation, Isolation
  - Stigma

Carlson, Eva and Ruzek, J., "PTSD and the Family", National Center for PTSD, found on the web at:

How to Help "Secondary" Victims

- Psycho-educational information
  - What to expect in recovery
  - How the system works
- Information about how to listen
  - Encourage sharing by victim
  - Contain own feelings and listen to victims
- Support around secondary trauma
  - Psycho-educational information
  - Crisis intervention related to symptoms

Key Points

- Complex trauma creates special needs in recovery
- Prior trauma, mental illness, developmental disability, and domestic violence strain the psychological resources of victims pre-assault
- Stigma and discrimination complicate recovery for victims

Key Points

- "Secondary" victimization
  - "Secondary" victims can suffer some of the same symptoms as the primary victim with the added responsibility for supporting the primary victim

Key Points

- Special Circumstances of the Offense
  - Drugs used to facilitate sexual assault dramatically alter the victim's consciousness
  - Some circumstances of sexual assault where the victim engages in some risky behavior may subject the victim to criminal or disciplinary action

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  - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/women/default.htm
  - Surgeon General's Report on Mental Health and Culture, Race and Ethnicity http://www.mentalhealth.org/cre/toc.asp